



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Thursday, March 6, 2008

**CONTACT:** Victor Bjornberg  
Travel Montana  
Montana Department of Commerce  
(406) 841-2795

Marissa Kozel  
Montana Department of Commerce  
(406) 841-2772

**Montana's Tourism Brand, Niche Markets, Geotourism, and  
Children & Nature Are Feature Presentations at 2008 Governor's  
Conference on Tourism & Recreation**

**Special Guests Lt. Governor John Bohlinger & First Lady Nancy Schweitzer**

(HELENA) – National tourism promotion and development experts headline the 2008 Montana Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation, April 17-18, at West Yellowstone's Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort.

Governor Brian Schweitzer and Montana Department of Commerce Director Anthony Preite are encouraging participation from the tourism and recreation industry and the media.

"Tourism and recreation are great ambassadors for Montana," said Governor Schweitzer.

"Visitors come from all over the world to enjoy Montana's great landscapes, rich history and unique character and they spend billions of dollars each year in the process. One of the things we can all be proud of is that the reason most of our visitors make repeat trips is the great people they meet here."

"Montana is a premier vacation destination for millions of people every year," said Commerce Director Anthony Preite. "The education and networking sessions planned for the Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation offer the industry's partners a chance to keep current on approaches and ideas to help ensure continued success."

- **Thursday, April 17, at 8:30 a.m.:** Travel and tourism "futurist" Judy Randall of Randall Travel Marketing, Inc., will take a look at Montana's newly updated tourism and recreation strategic plan, development of a Montana tourism brand and the industry's focus on niche markets such as geotourists to see how they mesh with the world's top travel trends.

- **Thursday, April 17, at 10:30 a.m.:** Geotourism and geotravelers are the focus of Montana's tourism marketing efforts. The National Geographic Society's Jim Dion with the Center for Sustainable Destinations will explain what Geotourism is while Steve Thompson from the National Parks Conservation Association will highlight Montana's first regional project based on the concept of Geotourism – the Crown of the Continent Geotourism MapGuide covering western Montana, SW Alberta and SE British Columbia.
- **Thursday, April 17, at 12:00 p.m. Luncheon:** Gardiner business owner Bill Berg will give a presentation about the National Park Service's Centennial Challenge program, including a video commentary from U.S. Senator Jon Tester. The Centennial Challenge program is aimed at financing improvements in the national parks to celebrate NPS' centennial in 2016.
- **Friday, April 18, at 8:30 a.m.:** Montana is in the process of developing a tourism brand all industry partners can use to raise consumer awareness of Montana as a distinctive visitor destination. The branding initiative's consulting team, Mike Bento and Kevin Schulman, will share the basic branding messages and provide suggestions on how they can be used effectively by Montana's tourism partners.
- **Friday, April 18, at 10:30 a.m.:** Addressing the growing issue of children being disconnected from nature and the outdoors, Dr. Cheryl Charles will share the work of her Children & Nature Network organization and this issue's importance for Montana's tourism and recreation future.
- **Friday, April 18, at 12:00 p.m. Luncheon:** First Lady Nancy Schweitzer and Montana Department of Transportation Director Jim Lynch will discuss the new Montana Geological Road signs which are part of the Governor and First Lady's Math and Science Initiative.
- **Friday, April 18, at 7:00 p.m. Banquet:** Lt. Governor John Bohlinger will highlight the conference's Friday night awards banquet agenda. The Lt Governor will assist in presenting the annual Tourism Person, Tourism Community, Tourism Event and Tourism Partnership of the Year Awards.

On both days attendees will be offered a series of afternoon break-out sessions on a variety of topics: Montana visitor expectations and satisfaction, segmenting markets, analyzing website use, international markets, email marketing, "green" tourism business practices, creating Tourism Business Improvement Districts, the National Folk Festival –Butte and the heritage trails of SW Montana.

The conference agenda also offers two walking tours around West Yellowstone which is celebrating its Centennial in 2008. The walking tours include West Yellowstone's Historic District and the Madison River Nature Trail.

The full agenda, registration materials, exhibitor and sponsor opportunities and more are available at [www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference](http://www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference). The \$120 conference registration fee is offered through March 20. Late registration fees increase incrementally approaching the conference.

Tourism and recreation is one of Montana's largest industries. In 2006, 10.3 million people visited Montana spending \$2.9 billion during their stay. Over 48,580 jobs are directly and indirectly supported by nonresident travel, resulting in over \$1 billion in total personal income for Montana residents.

###